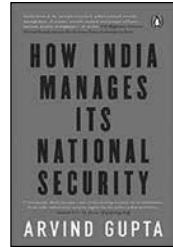*How India Manages Its National Security*

Arvind Gupta
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Theoretical Construct

Arvind Gupta's choice of the book title *How India Manages Its National Security* underlines the basic philosophy and method incorporated while addressing the issue of national security. The word 'management' is a commercial term which denotes the aspiration to be profitable and efficient. In his acknowledgement, he accepts the primacy of 'methods' to 'methodology' of research as having influenced his writings. The matrix within which he functions as an author is between the environment and the actors related to the management of India's national security. The environment being the geopolitics, national actors, issues of internal security, destabilising movements, natural disasters, cultural preconditions, non- traditional security threats and technology related to the strengthening of national security. Actors, on the other hand, being the ecosystem, armed forces, police forces, technology, borders, intelligence, diplomacy, cyber, the National Security Council (NSC) and national security system.

Each item listed in the environment can be put in a two by two matrix, with every item listed in the actors, with the X-axis covering the extent of 'opportunities' and the Y-axis, the 'resources'. Those who have written the blurbs have called the book a "primer" without realising the intrinsic mathematical value of the work or the opportunities that it provides to decipher the nuances of India's national security policy-making procedures, and philosophy for implementation in the absence of a defined national security policy document till date. Whether the method of writing this book by the author was by choice and design

or for being a public policy-maker and an implementer cannot be fathomed. Suffice to say that the author, being a trained scientific mind in the area of theoretical physics, comes out clearly in his presentation and deliberations to provide a much needed empirical basis of research in national security affairs. With a quantum shift in the processes of the national security-making architecture still shrouded in secrecy and ambiguity, the students of public policy-making in India as well as the corporate and private sectors involved in partnering the development of capacity-building and inputs in policy-making will find this book very useful. It will enable them to optimise the matrix of the environment and actors for their own goals of business ventures, on one side, and the government to substantiate the philosophy of 'Make in 'India' to 'Make for India', for total indigenisation of products and even the realm of ideas, on the other.

Content and Context

Fifty years ago, in 1967, A L Venkateshwaran, the principle information officer to the Government of India wrote a book entitled *Defence Organizations of India*, published by the Publication Division of the Government of India. It became a Bible for all security studies students in India and abroad as an official enunciation of various organisations related to defence, defence production and many aspect of defence policy making. Concurrently, Stephen P. Cohen's book, on *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to Nation Building* has had a gap of a similar period till the appearance of an outstanding work by Steven I. Wilkinson's book entitled *Army And The Nation: The Military and Indian Democracy Since Independence*, published in 2013. The following are the two books presently published in 2018 in quick succession: one by Gautam Sen on *The Purpose of India's Security Strategy: Defence, Deterrence and Global Involvement*, followed by Arvind Gupta's *How India Manages Its National Security*. These works have a global perspective highlighting India's security issues rather than enunciating India's defence policy, as written by many authors, starting from Sardar Panikar, P V Rao, et al.

What then is the intrinsic value of Arvind Gupta's present book under review? First, it is written by an author who has spent nearly a decade in the National Security Council Secretariat since its inception in 1999, culminating in the position of Deputy National Security Adviser for three years ending in 2017. Therefore, he has had a grand view of every apparatus related to the national security policy making at the highest levels. Despite being the Director of two think-tanks, though remaining essentially an establishment man, he has brought about academic rigour to his present work by basing it entirely on open sources and avoiding any compromising of classified material that he has been privy to. His 374-page exposition has less than 100 footnotes. This indicates how little he considers corroborative citation as usefully relevant for the enormous amount of work dubbed as security studies that is being published in India without any impact factor or sustained citation. Intelligent and serious researchers will find this book an ideal exposition of the matrix of the environment within which India's security concerns germinate and the actors who catalyse the formulation of national security policy. The dichotomy between the two is clear and the dialectics are interdependent. This makes the work original to contribute to the growth of knowledge and indicate a roadmap to bridge the gap between the realm of ideas and the domain of public policy making.

The work is contained in 12 chapters in which a single chapter on "Environment" provides the key to 11 actors to provide a multi-dimensional matrix approach to decision-making at various levels of enquiry, the relevance of the actors and, lastly, a logical reason to empower a particular actor at a specific point of time and circumstances. It is hoped that this work will be considered useful by the establishment and academia alike.

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